Chapter 3

Original Mandatory Referral

Mandatory Referral Site Plan Staff report

This information is provided as background for the schemes that were developed in this feasibility study, and is only provided for convenience in this report. There were numerous other documents and details in the original Mandatory Referral submission that were submitted and that should be consulted if necessary.

Issue---

The Mandatory Referral [MR] that was approved in 2002 does not reflect the current actual construction that was done. The major items not constructed were: the Gym, a major under ground parking structure, the landscaping and ramp access to the underground parking, the relocated utilities from Grant. Also the parkland from MNCPPC was not added to the site and at the time of construction Grant was not closed, but it has subsequently been closed although not to the extent as proposed in the Mandatory Referral (see Site 3 drawing showing original MR site vs. the Site 4 drawing as currently proposed)

Comments---

A major significant difference in addition to not building the Gym is the number of parking spaces that the MR requested, 207 spaces. There are currently 145 parking spaces provided on site. In recent meetings with MNCPPC to discuss this feasibility study, a Preliminary Zoning Analysis was presented that reviewed among other items, the required number of parking spaces. Current requirements using a "mixed-use" calculation for parking spaces (similar to what was originally done as noted in file information from MNCPPC) would require only 139 spaces today without the Gym (see the Preliminary Zoning Analysis under Chapter 5). In any event, due to the MR statute, DPS (Department of Permitting Services) does not require adherence to the Zoning Ordinance.

The ramp that was proposed at the north side of the site would no longer be required for access to below grade parking if there is no below grade parking. As we understand it, for budgetary reasons the below grade parking was eliminated from the construction project so there was no longer any need for the ramp down. Since there was no longer any ramp the ability to relocate utilities is affected by reducing the distance for any relocation required because they no longer have to re-rout around the ramp. The MR site (Site 3 dwg) is different, smaller then the proposed site (Site 4 dwg) and may require review by MNCPPC.

MNCPPC in various meetings during this study noted there may be a need to apply for a new MR depending on the scope of the differences between the original MR, the current as built Community Center and what is proposed for the Gym addition to the site. If the differences are minor they may be handled with an administrative review and if more pronounced they may require going again to the Planning Commission with a new or revised MR. The schemes as presented did not find any objections with MNCPPC. However a more thorough review when drawings are more developed is necessary. There were no initial objections or red flags to the schemes proposed.



July 19, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA:

John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division, #C

Glenn Kreger, Silver Spring Takoma Park Team Leader

FROM:

Margaret Rifkin, Planner Coordinator (301/495-4583) MDR

REVIEW TYPE:

Mandatory Referral

PROJECT NAME: Takoma Park Community Center

APPLICANT:

City of Takoma Park

CASE NUMBER:

02101-TP-1

REVIEW BASIS:

Article 28, Chapter 7-112 of the Regional District Act

ZONE:

R-60

MASTER PLAN:

Takoma Park Master Plan

FILING DATE:

June 5, 2002

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval with comments.

- 1. Address the following pedestrian access issues:
 - Reduce the radius of the curb at the corner of Maple and Philadelphia Avenues and narrow the pavement to the minimum allowed to shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians. Coordinate with State Highway Administration.
 - On Maple Avenue, incorporate additional streetscape features such as b. seating areas, enhanced crosswalks, and decorative lights.
 - Revise the parking lot design to reflect better pedestrian and bikeway access and additional landscaping. Consideration should be given to reducing the number of spaces shown to accommodate the improvements (up to approximately 10%).
 - Strengthen and enhance the pedestrian circulation, particularly to improve d. the connections between the open space and to enhance access to the building, as described in the body of this staff report.
- Provide improvements in the vicinity of the Community Center to implement the 2. Master Plan recommendations for an on-road bikeway (Class 2 or 3) on Maple Avenue and for a bike path (Class 1) to Piney Branch Road via Takoma/Piney Branch Local Park to include connections to the building for each.

3. Address the following parking issues:

- a. Four surface parking spaces near the Philadelphia Avenue entrance should be either relocated or removed to provide a 25-foot setback consistent with the development standards in the zone.
- b. Screening for the parking facility as described in the Zoning Ordinance should be provided along Philadelphia Avenue, Maple Avenue, and Grant Avenue.
- 4. Address compatibility issues with neighbors on Grant Avenue by providing for tree preservation and supplemental planting as appropriate along the slope. Select and locate lights to minimize intrusion into homes.
- 5. Work with SHA to address safety improvements along Philadelphia Avenue at the Main Entry Plaza.
- 6. Design and build the west side of Grant Avenue so that a sidewalk can be added in the future by the City.
- 7. Ensure a sufficient radius for emergency vehicles for the proposed redesigned culde-sac on Grant Avenue.

CONDITIONS (Related to use of Parkland)

- 1. Prior to conveyance of parkland, the City of Takoma Park and the M-NCPPC shall enter into an agreement providing for the City to make certain improvements to the existing park entrance and slope on Grant Avenue. Construction for the entrance is to be determined based on a fair exchange for the value of the parkland. Construction shall occur as part of Phase 2 of the Community Center construction. As part of this agreement the City shall provide: A concept design for an attractive new entrance to the park from Grant Avenue with access for pedestrians, bicyclists and emergency and maintenance vehicles; and design and construction drawings.
- 2. The City of Takoma Park shall submit site, landscape, lighting, and stormwater management plans for these improvements to the M-NCPPC for review and approval prior to applying for a building permit. The City shall obtain a park permit prior to construction.
- 3. The City of Takoma Park shall remove invasive species, provide a tree preservation plan, and stabilize slopes in the area to prevent erosion.
- 4. The City of Takoma Park shall officially abandon adjacent road right-of-way and record new plats to reflect the road abandonment and park conveyance.

5. In the event the conveyed property is no longer needed by the City for a public purpose, the land will be conveyed back to the M-NCPPC at no cost.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: NEIGHBORHOOD AND SITE

The site is located at 7500 Maple Avenue within the northeast quadrant of the intersection of Maple Avenue and Philadelphia Avenue (MD 410). It is bounded on the east by Grant Avenue with Piney Branch Elementary School on the opposite side of the street. To the north is property owned by the Board of Education and used for a special learning facility and for the Takoma Park Elementary School. The boundary with the Board of Education property consists of a steep slope that is wooded. Steps lead up the slope at that edge, to the elementary school's ballfields and entrance. The northern boundary is also shared with one single-family home that is part of a residential neighborhood on Grant Avenue. To the northeast and adjacent to the site is Takoma/Piney Branch Local Park which is owned by the M-NCPPC. To the west and facing the site across Philadelphia Avenue is Memorial Park which is owned by the City. To the south on the opposite side of Maple Avenue is a C&P Telephone substation and parking lot.

The site currently contains the Takoma Park Library and Municipal Center and Tool Library with surface parking supporting both these uses. The site and surrounding property are in the R-60 Zone. Diagonally across the intersection of Maple Avenue and Grant Avenue is land zoned R-10 in the Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone.

The site is adjacent to the Takoma Park Historic District which includes all the properties facing the site across Philadelphia Avenue.

SUMMARY OF PROJECT AND PROCESS

<u>Project Description:</u> This project is an expansion of the existing Municipal Center into an updated government/community center. This proposal requires the use of property that is currently right-of-way owned by the City as well as approximately 1/4 acre of parkland owned by the M-NCPPC.

The proposal creates a new building wrapped around the existing municipal center building. Parking and vehicular circulation surround the building on the lowest level which is partly below street level. A green roof then covers some of that parking and becomes a street level plaza.

The project includes space for the existing uses and adds an outdoor community plaza with a gazebo, a pocket park at the end of Grant Avenue, a sculpture garden, a main entry plaza, underground parking, a gymnasium, a recreation center, a computer learning center, a teen center, a child care center, a dance studio and craft rooms, facilities for seniors, and a multilevel atrium for community events and art display.

The community center will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. seven days a week. Specific uses will have more limited hours as reflected in the analysis of parking later in this staff report.

<u>Previous Planning Board Actions:</u> There have been no previous Planning Board actions. The mandatory referral for site selection was approved administratively.

Community Outreach and Community Concerns: The City of Takoma Park has conducted extensive community outreach beginning in 1998, when they started looking at possible sites. In 1999, the City held a town meeting attended by more than 300 Takoma Park residents. A Steering Committee and five committees were formed as a result of that meeting. Major decisions involved public hearings in front of the City Council. The City Council approved this plan in January 2002. During the process, the neighborhood associations representing residents who live closest to the site were briefed on a regular basis and neighborhood leaders participated in many of the committee meetings.

Community concerns have focused on the relocation of the Grant Avenue cul-de-sac which will bring maneuvering vehicles closer to existing homes.

PROJECT ANALYSIS - FINDINGS

Finding: This project will be consistent with the Takoma Park Master Plan when comments are addressed concerning additional enhancements to the streetscape and provision of bikeway facilities along Maple Avenue.

The proposal is consistent with the vision of the Master Plan and specific recommendations concerning improvements. The Plan states "support provision of new or redesigned Municipal Center buildings and public spaces, including a library, school, and possibly a community center."

The proposal is consistent with the Master Plan's recommendations for Maple Avenue. The Master Plan states: "Improve Maple Avenue between MD410/Philadelphia Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway. Provide attractive features such as flowerbeds, benches, decorative lights, seasonal banners, seating areas, and enhanced crosswalks. Traffic calming features should also be considered." (page 95). This proposal will improve Maple Avenue through the enhanced landscaping and provision of a plaza in front of the building that reaches from the main entrance to the crosswalks at the intersection of Maple Avenue and Philadelphia Avenue. The proposal should incorporate additional design features as well, such as seating areas, enhanced crosswalks, and decorative street lights.

The Master Plan also identifies Maple Avenue as a bikeway route (Class 2 or 3) connecting Sligo Creek Park Trail and the Takoma Metro Station. A bike path (Class 1) is also recommended from the Municipal Center to Piney Branch Road via Takoma/Piney Branch local park. This proposal should show how these routes lead to the entrances to the community center.

Finding: This project is consistent with the Development Standards for the Zone except as explained below and as shown in the Summary Table which follows:

- The proposal will meet the development standards in the R-60 Zone along Grant Avenue through the acquisition of parkland.
- The surface parking lot does not meet the 25-foot development standard for the setback along Philadelphia Avenue. Four surface parking spaces should be either relocated or removed to provide the setback.
- Screening for the parking facility as described in the Zoning Ordinance should be provided along Philadelphia Avenue, Maple Avenue, and Grant Avenue: "a solid wall or fence, of adequate height for screening or a compact evergreen hedge with a minimum height of 3 feet at the time of original planting" (Section 59-E2.91.a-f). The screening should be shown on a landscape and lighting plan.
- The amount of interior green space for the surface parking lot does not meet the development standards in the zone and the design should be revised accordingly.

Summary Table
Development Standards in the R-60 Zone
Bold type indicates where the Development Standards are not met

| Bold type indicates where the bevelopment standards are not met | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Factoria | Required for Private | Proposed | |
| Feature | i e | Proposed | |
| | Development | | |
| BUILDING | | | |
| Front yard setbacks | | | |
| Maple Avenue | 25 feet | 90 feet | |
| Philadelphia Avenue | 25 feet | 40 feet | |
| Side yard setbacks – | 8 feet | | |
| Grant Avenue | sum = 18 feet | More than 10 feet | |
| Rear yard setback | 20 feet | 90 & 127 feet | |
| Height | 2.5 stories/35 feet | 34 feet | |
| Max. building coverage - % net lot area | 35% | 25% | |
| Distance from parking: farthest space to | 500 feet | 314 feet | |
| an entrance | | · | |
| PARKING |) | | |
| Front yard setback | | | |
| - Maple Avenue | 25 feet | 29 feet | |
| > Philadelphia Avenue | 25 feet | 12 feet | |
| Side yard setback - Grant Avenue | 8 feet | | |
| | sum of sides =18 | More than 10 feet | |
| | feet | | |
| Rear yard setback | 20 feet | 35 feet | |
| Loading Space | 1 space | 3 parking spaces | |
| Total Auto Spaces | 218 | 207 | |
| -Standard | 211 | 199 | |
| ⇒Spaces for the Handicapped | 7 | 8 | |

| Feature | Required for Private Development | Proposed |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------|
| Bicycle spaces | 14 | 21 |
| Motorcycle spaces | 6 | 6 |
| Landscape adjacent to street right-of-way: | 10 foot width | To be provided |
| Maple Avenue & Philadelphia Avenue | | |
| 10 foot min. width + 1 tree/40 feet+ 3-foot | | |
| hedge or wall | | |
| Landscape - perimeter | 4 foot width | To be provided |
| 4 foot min. width + 1 tree/40 feet | To be determined | |
| Internal green area | 5% | To be provided |

- The total number of spaces required is 218. The number currently shown is 207. Because of the need for improved pedestrian and bikeway access within the parking lots to connecting paths and sidewalks and for additional internal green area, a further reduction up to a total of approximately 10% below the number shown should be considered. The revisions to accommodate better pedestrian and bikeway circulation should be reflected in a site plan, landscape plan, and lighting plan. A reduction of the amount of parking is acceptable for the following reasons:
 - o Many people will be walking instead of driving. There is a high concentration of people living within ¼ mile walking distance in nearby high-rise apartments. There are also bus stops in front of the library and in front of Piney Branch Elementary School that provide service. Students from the two nearby elementary schools and the Takoma Park Intermediate School are all within walking distance.
 - The City will be able to manage the use of the building so that some uses can be closed when there are special events that increase the demand for parking.
 - Major events are not frequent, occurring less often than once a month.
 The largest events occur 1-3 times a year. The City has made provisions for overflow parking off-site for such events.

Finding: With the recommended modifications, this project will be compatible with existing and proposed adjacent uses and structures.

Compatibility with nearby neighborhoods is the primary concern since the site is otherwise surrounded by public schools and parkland.

The neighborhood closest to the project is along Grant Avenue to the north. The nearest home in that neighborhood is approximately 100 feet away from the surface parking lot and is at an elevation more than 10 feet higher and separated by a slope

with existing trees. Residents have requested that a planted buffer be maintained along this slope. In addition, lights should be selected and located to minimize intrusion into nearby homes.

The shortening of Grant Avenue brings vehicles maneuvering within the cul- de-sac closer to several homes. The vehicles are driven by people coming to the park for recreation or maintenance or to drop children off for school. The impact of this activity has been raised as a concern by neighbors. For this reason, the cul-de-sac has been designed to sit slightly off-center so it is further from the homes and instead extends into the entry area of the park.

Compatibility with homes in the Historic District across Philadelphia Avenue is achieved. The most significant contribution to this is the character, orientation, and massing of the building. The building includes architectural references to historic styles found within the community in particular, the inspiration for the new building is the North Takoma Hotel of 1907.

Finding: When the following comments are addressed, the location of the buildings, open space, and circulation will be adequate, safe, and efficient.

<u>Buildings</u>: The placement works well on the site provided the parkland conveyance is approved. One safety consideration is that the route to the park along Grant Avenue is opposite the blank wall of the gymnasium where there are no windows looking out on that area. Consideration should be given to organizing the building spaces to ensure that there is an active interior space with windows looking out on this route to and from the park.

Open space & pedestrian circulation: There are three main areas of open space: The Entry Plaza, the Gazebo Space, and the Pocket Park. Collectively, the amount of open space is adequate and is distributed well throughout the site. Pedestrian connections between the spaces and to the public realm of the streets should be strengthened. Maple Avenue, as the civic main street, Grant Avenue as the route to the park and "seam" to connect to Piney Branch Elementary School next door, and Philadelphia Avenue as a main thoroughfare and major transit route should all have strong and welcoming connections to the public gathering spaces associated with this town hall/community center.

 The Entry Plaza which is at the intersection of Maple and Philadelphia Avenues provides pedestrian access to the main entrance of the building on Maple Avenue. The Entry Plaza is the most prominent of the three spaces.

The Entry Plaza is not currently designed as the town square because there have been several accidents where vehicles have run off Philadelphia Avenue and directly into that area of the site. Therefore, the City should consider design features such as reflective, crash resistant bollards and highly visible flags or banners along the edge. In addition, the City should work with the State Highway Administration (SHA) to address these safety

concerns. This plaza space and road should be designed so that the plaza can be used safely for major gatherings.

In addition, the intersections with Maple Avenue should be improved by reducing the crossing distance for pedestrians. The radius of the curb could be reduced to 30 feet. Differentiated pavement and enhancements to Maple Avenue should be considered at both the Philadelphia Avenue and Grant Avenue intersections. The proposal shows a depressed curb with bollards at the intersection with Philadelphia Avenue for better bicycle and pedestrian access and to create a stronger plaza presence within the community. A similar treatment should be considered at Grant Avenue and Maple Avenue.

In addition, pedestrian routes from the crosswalks to the two building entrances should be clear and more direct. For example, consideration should be given to creating a pedestrian axis from the corner, on a straight line through the plaza, through the building entrance near the library, and then to an attractive pedestrian entrance for the surface parking lot beyond. The route to the main entrance from the crosswalks should be direct and take into consideration the view lines that are created for pedestrians moving through the plaza to and from that entrance.

A stronger connection between the surface parking lot and the open space is also desirable. The above revisions will provide for a better visual and pedestrian link between the two.

- The Gazebo Space which faces Grant Avenue is associated with the building entrance that leads to the gymnasium from the school and park. The Gazebo Space is currently identified as the primary outdoor gathering space or town square. It sits on top of underground parking and is therefore separated by a low planter wall from Maple Avenue and Grant Avenue on two sides. There is only one entry point directly from a street and it is from Grant Avenue. Consideration should be given to revising this design to provide a more direct pedestrian route from the intersection of Grant Avenue and Maple Avenue. The space could be opened up more to this civic main street and the community. In addition, the connection between the Entry Plaza and this space should be strengthened by widening and enhancing the passage between the two. Consideration should also be given to creating focal points to draw people around the curve of the building from one space to the other.
- The third open space is the Pocket Park that sits at the end of Grant Avenue and provides an attractive passage space between Takoma/Piney Branch Local Park and the community center. The pedestrian connection to the back door of the community center should be clearly marked in the pavement and with signs. A more generous landscaped connection should be provided.

- The west side of Grant Avenue should be designed to accommodate a sidewalk. The City would like to direct people to cross Grant Avenue at a specific location to avoid conflicts with vehicles. For that reason, the City does not wish to provide a sidewalk on the west side of Grant at this time. In the future there may be a need for such a sidewalk. It should not be precluded by the design.
- On the north side of the building, continue paths from Takoma Park Elementary School and Grant Avenue, across the surface parking lot to connect to the community center entrances. Enhance the site design associated with the entrances so they are highly visible.
- On the South side provide direct pedestrian access from Maple Avenue and Grant Avenue to the building entrances on ground level with clearly marked crossings, pavement, and signs.
- On the west side investigate creating an enhanced crosswalk on Philadelphia Avenue for transit users.

<u>Vehicular Circulation:</u> The vehicular access to the parking areas works well. The use of three parking spaces for loading as proposed is acceptable. The design should ensure that a sufficient radius is provided for emergency vehicles to maneuver within the proposed new cul- de-sac at the end of Grant Avenue.

<u>Bicycle Circulation:</u> Maple Avenue is a framework bike route (Class 2 or 3) as recommended in the Master Plan. Another framework bike route connects Maple Avenue with Piney Branch Road and Takoma Intermediate School through this site (Class 1). This site design should include improvements to implement these routes such as striping and signs. Provide clear signs along Maple Avenue between Sligo Creek Park and the entrance to the community center.

Finding: Transportation

The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance requirements are satisfied. The City's traffic study confirms that Local Area Transportation Review Criteria are also satisfied.

Finding: Consistency with Environmental Guidelines and Regulations

<u>Forest Conservation Law:</u> An exemption has been granted from the requirement to submit a Forest Conservation Plan for both parcels. This project has an approved NRI/FSD for both the City property and the Takoma/Piney Branch Park as required. The project also has an approved Tree Preservation Plan.

Stormwater Management: This project is in a Watershed Restoration Area as identified in the County Stream Protection Strategy. For this reason, all efforts should be made to address degraded conditions by improving runoff conditions, stream restoration, and

stormwater retrofit. These environmental concerns are also addressed in the conditions related to the use of parkland as discussed in this staff report.

Comment: Use of Park Property

The City is requesting the conveyance of approximately 0.5 acre of parkland at the edge of Takoma Piney Branch Local Park. This will allow the City to build within what is currently the Grant Avenue right-of-way and to grade and terrace a slope that is currently parkland. This will allow the access drive for the parking facility and a corner of the gymnasium to be built outside of what is today the City's parcel.

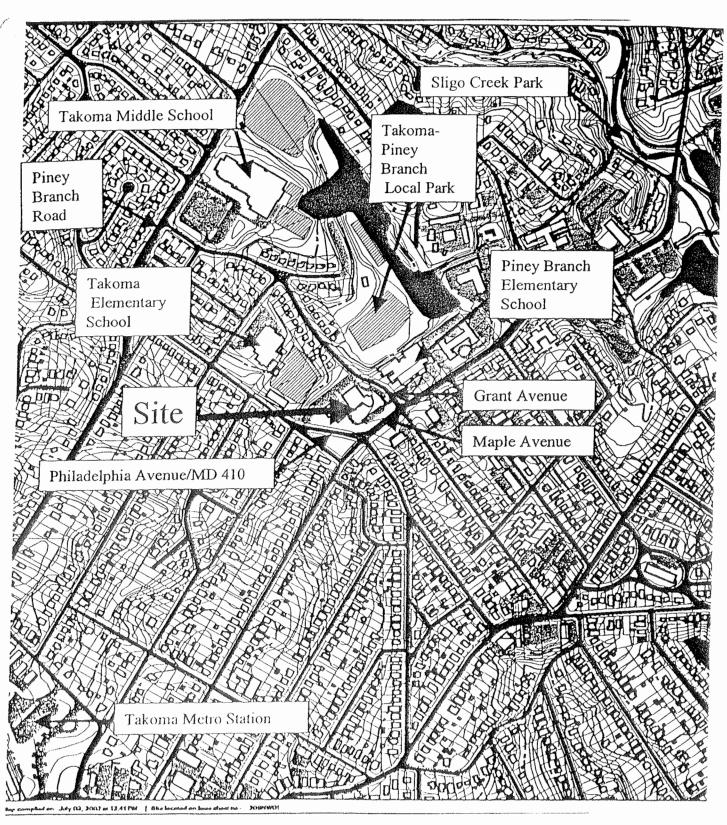
The City is also proposing changes to the park slope to facilitate construction of the access drive. The slope will be quite visible to users of the new Community Center and the park, and will be terraced, landscaped, and maintained by the City as part of the site. The following comments are recommended:

- Prior to conveyance of parkland, the City of Takoma Park and the M-NCPPC shall enter into an agreement providing for the City to make certain improvements to the existing park entrance and slope on Grant Avenue. Construction for the entrance is to be determined based on a fair exchange for the value of the parkland. Construction shall occur as part of Phase 2 of the Community Center Construction. As part of this agreement the City shall provide a concept design for an attractive new entrance to the park from Grant Avenue with access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and emergency and maintenance vehicles, and design and construction drawings.
- 2. The City of Takoma Park shall submit site, landscape, lighting, and stormwater management plans for these improvements to the M-NCPPC for review and approval prior to applying for a building permit. The City shall obtain a park permit prior to construction.
- 3. The City of Takoma Park shall remove invasive species, provide a tree preservation plan, and stabilize slopes in the area to prevent erosion.
- 4. The City of Takoma Park shall officially abandon adjacent road right-of-way and record new plats to reflect the road abandonment and park conveyance.
- 5. In the event the conveyed property is no longer needed by the City for a public purpose, the land will be conveyed back to the M-NCPPC at no cost.

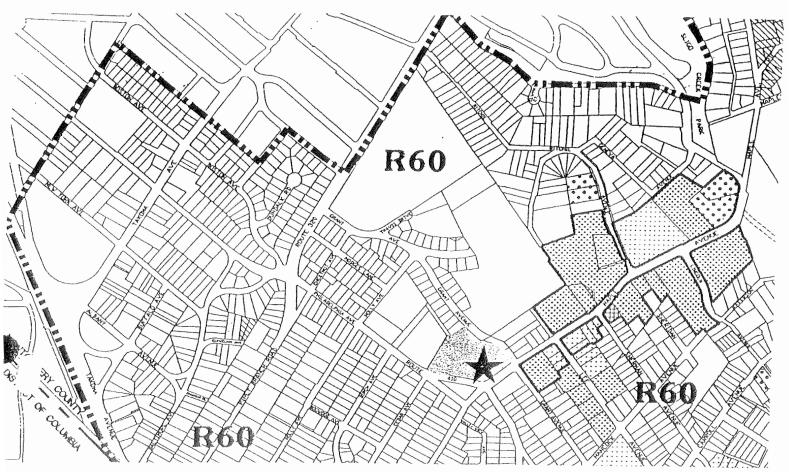
MR:ha: a:\rifkin1\tp community ctr.doc

Attachments:

Vicinity Map
Zoning Map
Existing Conditions
View from Maple Avenue
Site Plan with Comments
Site Plan with Comments Regarding Pedestrian Circulation

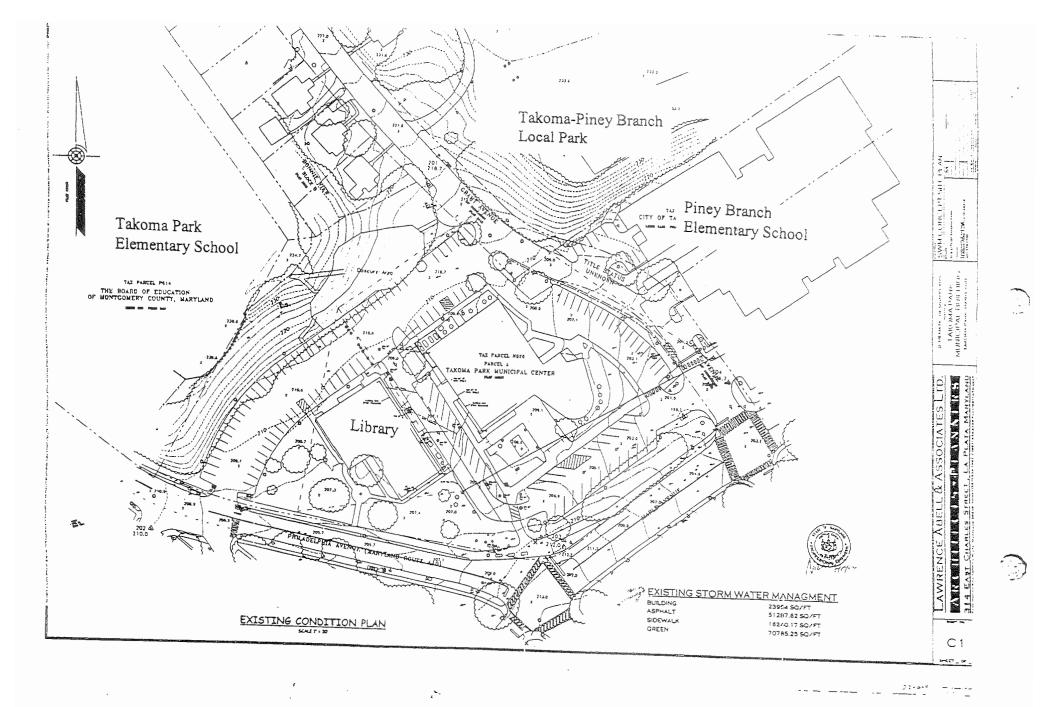


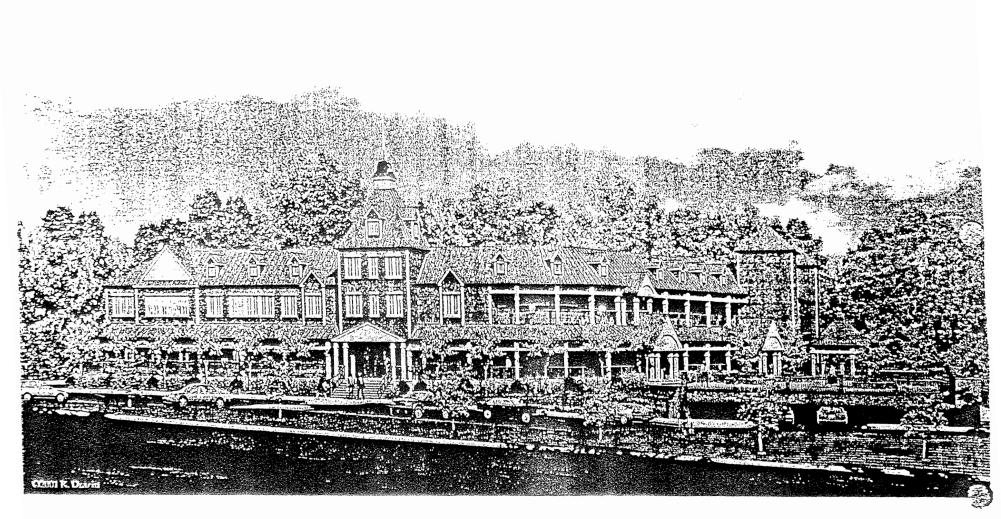
Vicinity Map – Takoma Park Community Center



Proposed Zoning - Area C Area D

LEGEND ∞ ≈ ∞∞ County Line massm Master Plan Boundary C-1 - Local Commercial R-10 - Multi-Family High Density Residential R-20 - Multi-Family Medium Density Residential R-30 - Multi-Family Low Density Residential R-40 - One Family Semi-Detached RE-2 , R-60 - Single Family Residential 600 ft NROZ - Neighborhood Retail Overlay Zone CROZ - Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone R-60 - Single Family Residential







TAKOMA PARK MUNICIPAL CENTER

DESIGNED BY LAWRENCE ABILL & ASSOCIATES

View from Maple Avenue

